

The Gospel of God

Romans 1:8-17

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:8-17 NKJV).

Theme: Am I ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

--The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes

1. First the bad news

-- The gospel means good news. Good news is not good unless you know about the bad news first. The story is told of a man who discovered a pill that would heal all types of cancer. After the man had discovered it, he went to many people in excitement telling them that he got the cure for cancer. The people he said it too just gave him blank expressions and showed no appreciation. Why? What sense does it

have to give people the cure of cancer to those who don't need it! So what? This is the cry of our generation. Preachers say: "Jesus is the answer!"; "The answer to what?", many people would ask. The gospel (or good news) wouldn't make any sense unless we REALLY come to grips with the bad news of being human.

-- What is the bad news? The sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden separated the human race from the glory of God. The result of their sin was the fall. Satan deceived Eve in the garden of Eden and then she gave the forbidden fruit to Adam. And because of their disobedience to God, they became guilty before God. The story of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden is not just a story or a myth. It is history. It really happened! If Adam was not a historical figure the gospel of Jesus Christ makes no sense. I say this because Jesus Christ is called the last Adam in the first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:45). If Adam wasn't a historical person, then Jesus wasn't one either. Because Adam was the representation of humanity and because he sinned in the garden of Eden we all sinned and are partakers of a sinful nature. 1 Corinthians 15:22 says we have all sinned and died in Adam, and therefore we will all die physically one day because the punishment of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Romans 3:23 says that we have all sinned, and therefore we are separated from the glory of God. We are all far away from God because of our sins. In Genesis 2 God said to Adam and Eve that they could eat from all the trees in the garden but of the tree in the middle of the garden (The tree of the knowledge of good and evil) they could not eat because the day that they eat of that tree they shall surely die (Genesis 2:17). The punishment of sin is death (Romans 6:23). "The soul that sins must die" (Ezekiel 18:20). That is the divine law and decree of God. We all ate of the forbidden fruit, haven't we? We haven't loved God always with all our hearts, souls, and strength, have we? We have served idols; we

have stolen things, lied, coveted other people and their possessions, lusted and blasphemed God's Name numerous times haven't we?

-- An Important truth. Because God is holy and just we should be punished because of our sins. The soul that sins must die! (Ezekiel 18:20). This death implies physical and spiritual death. This truth has been revealed in the Bible through the sacrifices of animals that had to be killed on God's command. We see that in the Old Testament that God commanded that when someone sinned, the people had to sacrifice innocent animals (animals cannot sin) to cover and atone for the people's sins.

-- An important truth. We deserve eternal punishment because all of us have willingly sinned against God on numerous occasions. God is infinitely worthy and Valuable, and therefore our punishment is infinitely deserving of death because we have sinned against such a Worthy and Valuable God. God is the most precious Being in the Universe. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He is worthy of all our worship and obedience. And to disregard and insult Him deserves utmost contempt. God wouldn't be holy or just if sins and sinners are not punished accordingly. A just human Judge cannot let a mass murderer go free after he has been convicted of his crime just because he is sorry for his sins and just because he repented of his wrongdoing. Justice demands punishment. Justice requires that every evil doer gets an appropriate sentence. A rapist or a thief also must be punished for his/her misdeeds. A Judge wouldn't be good if he lets murderers and rapists go free without any justice given to them. If he just makes evil doers go free he would not be protecting the citizens of the country he is living in. It is the same with God. If God doesn't judge evildoers and murderers and idolaters and sexually immoral persons and liars and blasphemers he wouldn't be a good judge. To protect His Holy Name and His glory and His people, evil doers must get a fitting

punishment. To sin is to defame God. To sin is to live in contempt of God and to rebel against His authority, value, worth, and kingdom. It is treason! To sin is "to miss the mark". If God is not the most Valuable Person in our lives we are making an idol of something or someone and we, therefore, stand guilty before a holy God. The Bible says that if we hate our brother we have committed murder (1 John 3:15). Jesus said that if we look at a woman and lust after her, we have committed adultery with her in our heart (Matthew 5:28). The Ten Commandments of God show us where we fall short of God's holy standards. The Ten Commandments show us our sins.

-- The facts are: we all stand guilty before God's judgment throne on hundreds or thousands of accounts of rebellion and contempt against His majesty. Everyone of us is guilty in God's court! If God would send us to hell for eternity, we would only get what we deserve! God doesn't owe us anything! God doesn't owe us everlasting life or forgiveness of sins. We are the ones who need His mercy and grace! Do we really believe that we desperately need Him! Do we really believe that we stand condemned before His judgment throne? Do we truly believe that our hearts are desperately wicked and that we are in dire need of God's mercy?

-- If we don't really understand that we won't see the glory and worth of the gospel aright. We won't appreciate the gospel unless we come to grips with our desperate need! If we don't see our desperate plight before God, we will continue to enjoy and love our sins. We would continue to offend God and be loveless towards our neighbors.

-- A common reaction among people regarding sin is a careless attitude and indifference. Sinners say: "sin is not that bad" and "God will just forgive again" and "God is love." "He will not actually punish us for our sins." Yes God is a God of love, but He is holy as well and a God of justice. God is not ONLY a God of love!

2. The GOSPEL is the power of God unto salvation

-- Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

-- Acts 4:12 reveals: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12 NKJV).

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. There are not many powers of God unto salvation. The gospel is not a power among many powers unto salvation. Do you believe that? There are not "many roads that lead to heaven." That statement is heretical. The Greek word here used for power is: "Dunamis". We get the word dynamite from this word. The gospel is supposed to have an explosion in your life. Things cannot stay the same after you have met with Jesus Christ and the gospel. If you have received the gospel of Jesus Christ your life will permanently change!

-- So what is the gospel? I find that many people believe in the gospel only in part. The Roman Catholic's believed in a half (partial) gospel before and after the Reformation. The gospel is not only about "Jesus that died for my sins." That is a pathetic diminishing of the gospel.

-- Yes we deserve the judgement of God. Yes we are by nature the children of wrath (Ephesians 2:1,2). Yes we have to bear our punishment. Yes we should be separated from the glory of God. Yes, we stand guilty before God on numerous accounts of rebellion and yes, Jesus Christ came to die for us as our substitute on the cross to satisfy God's Justice and to absorb the wrath of God on our behalf! Halleluja! These are glorious realities! And yes Jesus did conquer death and yes, Jesus demolished the power of Satan and sin and death by the gospel! Jesus did all these things, but why?

-- What does Paul say in Romans 1:17,18. Mark the words: "For in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." The Greek word for righteousness is dikaiosune.

What did Paul mean by the word "dikaiosune": "righteousness"? And what does it mean that it has been revealed? You will see that Paul uses this word over and over in the letter to the Romans (Romans 3:22-27; 9:30-33; 10:1-4 and also in the letter to the Philippians (Chapter 3:6-11). Many times I see in Christian churches and among Christians that they think that they have to earn a righteousness before God! I lived on a mission station for seven years where Christians believed that and taught that. The Roman Catholic's still believe that you have to earn a righteousness before God. Many evangelical churches preach that as well: "yes Jesus died in my place to take away my sins, to forgive my sins, but for judgment day God requires my deeds, my righteousness, that will justify me!" Rubbish!

-- No Christian before or after his regeneration by the Holy Spirit can boast that he/she hasn't sinned. In other words, no person who has lived a sinless life before or after his regeneration by the Holy Spirit to which he can trust. The best and most holy among us have an imperfect righteousness after our conversion. We all are blemished by our sins. Listen to what the prophet Isaiah said many centuries ago: "But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6 NKJV).

-- God is holy. And to enter heaven we must be blameless and perfect. Isaiah declared: "A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it" (Isaiah 35:8 NKJV).

-- We need something that we can trust in whereby we can know that it will help us on judgment day. We cannot trust in the arm of the flesh or our imperfections. But where can we find this perfect holiness and righteousness that will guarantee our entrance into heaven?

-- When I die one day and stand before God, what will guarantee my entrance into heaven? My goodness? My imperfect righteousness? How many times and how many hours I prayed for people? How many times I gave food to the hungry? How many times I read my Bible? Nonsense!!

-- We need God's righteousness to stand blameless before God! We need to be counted as righteous before God otherwise, we have no chance or right to stand in God's presence. Let's say you want to buy a new cellphone from Vodacom worth R5000, but you still owe Vodacom R10 000 on your old contract. Before you can purchase the new cell phone (let's say you want to buy it cash on 'pay as you go') your debt first has to be settled. Your debt needs to be paid before you can buy the new cell phone! If your debt is paid then, your account would be on 0. But then you still need R5000 credit to buy the new phone. The same principle applies spiritually with God. We were all in great debt. But Jesus Christ came and paid our fine. God paid for our sins. But now our account stands only at 0. We still need "R5000", God's perfection or righteousness" to qualify to enter heaven. That is where Jesus Christ's perfect life comes in! God gives you His perfection, His righteousness for free if you trust in Jesus Christ. Not only did Jesus die in your place as your substitute, but Jesus lived in your place as well (a perfect, sinless life) and obtained a perfect righteousness on your behalf. In other words, He lived a substitutionary life on your behalf that you need to count as yours, to enter heaven! You need R5000 credit! By trusting in Jesus, Jesus "credits" you with

His perfection, (or sinlessness or righteousness) so that God may accept you! Perfect righteousness is what you need!

-- This is the lost part of the gospel that is missing in so many churches! We need the whole Jesus. His substitutionary death and life. His death on our behalf and His life on our behalf! That is what leads to our acquittal on Judgement day! That and that alone! That is what has been revealed in the gospels. When Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons and did many miracles and raised the dead, it was all a demonstration of the perfect righteousness of God. Jesus always upheld the worth of the Father's glory with unwavering consistency, and that demonstrated the righteousness of God. Jesus obeyed the law of God perfectly and thereby did He obtain a perfect righteousness which has now been revealed! The gospels revealed His sinless, perfect life. This is the lost part of the gospel. This gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes! Only this one! If I believe that Jesus lived and died in my place, then God justifies me, and I am acquitted in God's Court of Justice! By a true faith in Christ, God looks at me through the merits and achievements of Christ Jesus and that alone leads to my justification. I am declared just and righteous only by faith in the atoning death of Christ and by the righteousness of Christ Jesus. As Romans 8:1 says: "there is now, therefore, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." And in Romans 3:21,24-26 it states: "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:21, 24-26 NKJV).

3. For EVERYONE who believes!

-- Why do so many Christians have no assurance of salvation? Why do so many Christians have anxiety about the day they are going to die? Why although they have heard the gospel so many times and received it into their hearts do they still doubt their salvation? The reason is because they hold on to a partial gospel! A partial Jesus cannot save you! A partial motorcar cannot get you to your destination! A partial dress cannot cover a woman's whole body! A partial meal cannot fill your stomach! A partial golf club cannot hit a golf ball into a hole! Who wants an incomplete gospel? We need to put our trust in the whole Jesus of the Bible. We need the whole gospel and nothing besides! We need to put our trust in Jesus Christ for who He is! That Jesus and that gospel will save us! Jesus' righteousness and His sacrifice on the cross is what you need my friend! That gospel will give you assurance of salvation!

-- There was an old missionary at a mission station I worked at for 7 years. He served God his whole life and did gospel ministry for decades and then when he was old he made the following shocking statement: "I don't know if I had done enough to be accepted by God!!!!" I wanted to say to him: "That is the whole point! You will never be able to do enough!" Friend you will never do enough to merit salvation! Never! It is impossible! You need Christ's perfection and righteousness to count as yours!! Salvation is by the grace of God, through faith, not by works! Do we really believe that?? You need perfection, God's perfection! That's what gives you assurance of salvation! Rest in the finished work of Christ. Receive His unspeakable gift!! Rest in God. He has done it all! Glory to God alone!

-- And the gospel is for everyone who believes! It's for all ethnic groups. That is why Paul says he is a debtor to the Barbarians and the Greek to the wise and the simple folk. But all people have not faith!

Most people want to earn their way into heaven! They want to achieve something before God! That is why all the religions in the world except Christianity teach that works save a person!

-- There is about 12 000 ethnic groups in the world today. And God will have a people among all of them! That is what is revealed in Revelation 5:9; 7:9. Jesus said in the gospel: "Come to Me all who are burdened and are heavily laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Come with your sins, with your burdens, with your anxieties, with YOUR good works, with YOUR achievements, with YOUR righteousness and lay it down before Jesus Christ. God is not impressed with YOUR works. It is defiled with your impure motives. Jesus and Jesus alone is what you need! Not Jesus and believers' baptism. Not Jesus and your particular denomination, not Jesus and tongues, not Jesus and whatever!! Salvation is in the work and Person of Jesus Christ alone! That is the legacy of the 16th Century Reformation: Soli Christos! Sola Fide! Sola Gracia!

-- And it's for everyone who believes! Faith is not my achievement! Faith is the channel, the pipe that channels salvation. And God is the one that lays the pipe. Christ saves us through faith, not because of faith! God reconciles us to Him through faith. Faith is essentially a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 3:28). As Paul said: ".....But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Philippians 3:7-9 NKJV).

4. I'm not ashamed of the gospel says Paul. Am I ashamed?

-- Paul said: I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. No wonder Paul! Martin Luther, the great reformer was not ashamed at Worms before the Holy Roman Empire in the 16th century as well. Luther's life was in danger but he was willing to die for the true gospel! The Catholic Church wanted him dead because of this gospel! But Luther was as bold as a lion. But what about you and me friend? Are we ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? It is not only missionaries and pastors that should be witnesses of Jesus Christ! All true Christians are in full-time service of God and should be willing to share the glorious gospel, the gospel of power, to those around them.

-- Listen to Jesus' words in Mark 8:38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38 NKJV).

Is there any harsher words than these in the New Testament? Jesus doesn't give us a choice. Yes we are not all a Paul or a Peter, but we all have to be witnesses for Jesus and for what is right. We all should be bold for Jesus and His kingdom

-- NB: I don't obtain a righteousness or justification by my witness!

-- The fact that I'm bold for Jesus and a witness for Him and His gospel is the evidence of true faith. It is a privilege to be His witness and to suffer for the sake of God's Name. When the apostles suffered for being Jesus' witnesses in Jerusalem, the following was written about them: "So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41 NKJV).

-- To make a stand for Jesus comes naturally when the Holy Spirit is in your heart, when you embrace and trust in the true gospel. The Jesus of the Bible will send you to go and be His witness. He will send you on

His errands! It is unavoidable! If the Holy Spirit does not live inside of you and if you do not bear fruit to the glory of God and if God does not use you, then you are not His child. It is as simple as that.

Listen to Charles Spurgeon's words: hard words, but we have to hear them. Charles Spurgeon was reckoned as the Prince of Preachers in the 19th Century. More pages of him are in print than any other Christian author. He said the following:

"Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that!"

and: "Morality will you keep out of jail, but only the blood of Jesus will keep you out of hell"

I'll close with this:

-- Have you ever seen Table Mountain and the Twelve Apostles in the Cape Town? Psalm 36:8 says: "Your righteousness is like the great mountains" (Psalms 36:6 NKJV).

Mountains represent unshakableness. The great south Easter (wind) cannot move those mountains in the Cape. It doesn't matter how hard the wind blows; the mountains remain unmovable. So it is with God's righteousness. It is unshakable and unmovable. It is indestructible. It is the foundation of our lives. When the storms and the winds of life blow against our houses to make it fall, it will not succeed, because God's righteousness is indestructible, unmovable and unshakable. It is the foundation of our hope of ever entering heaven and being accepted by God.

Believe in the gospel, because it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. For in it the righteousness of God has been revealed!